



INDIA by Prachi Deshmukh Odhekar

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Overview

Before 1976, education was the exclusive responsibility of the states, and state governments have been major providers of elementary education since independence. However, differences in the emphasis put on education and investment and implementation of educational programs accentuated disparities among states in educational attainment.

In 1976, in order to overcome these disparities among states, a constitutional amendment added education to the concurrent list, meaning that central and state governments will bear equal responsibility for providing education henceforth. However, after this amendment the actual role of states as primary provider of education largely remained unchanged, while the central government worked on building the uniform character of education across the nation by reinforcing the national and integrated character of education, maintaining quality and standards including those of the teaching profession at all levels, and promoting the study and monitoring of the educational requirements of the country.

The Government of India issued National Education Policies in 1968 and 1986. These policies made primary education a national priority and envisaged an increase in

resources committed to improve access and quality of education. The central government also launched several centrally sponsored schemes to improve primary education across the country.

In the mid-1990s, a series of District Primary Education Programs (DPEP) were introduced in districts where female literacy rates were low. The DPEPs pioneered new initiatives to bring out-of-school children into school, and were the first to decentralize the planning for primary education and actively involve communities. In the recent years the central government has successfully implemented several programs nationwide, such as, mid-day meal program and the sarva shiksha abhiyan (Education for all) program.

The Central Government continues to play a pivotal role in the evolution and monitoring of educational policies and programs. The national policies envisage a national system of education for uniformity in education across the nation that will provide universal access to elementary education, retain and improve quality in elementary education, emphasize girls' education, and emphasize vocationalization of secondary education. Current national system of education is based on a national curricular framework that common core along with other flexible and region-specific components.

The Government of India has passed The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act in 2009. After passing this act India became one of 135 countries to regard education as a fundamental right. As a result of this act elementary education is free for every child in the age group of six to fourteen years and provision of education for this age group is compulsory for the state. Secondary education, however, is not provided for free as of now.

The structure of schooling

Management structure

According to the national Human Resource Development Ministry, of which the Department of Education is a part, the concept of shared responsibility for providing education envisages “concerted efforts for the development of the education maintaining a broad uniformity in standards and structures.”¹

Planning commissions at national and state levels play an important role in the Indian education scene, as they are responsible for policies and approaches to be adopted in the future. The Planning and Monitoring Department of the Department of Education at the national level works closely with the education division of the national planning commission. Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) is another national agency that is responsible for guiding and coordinating planning and policy making endeavors related to education at the national level. CABE consists of Ministers of Education of all States and Union Territories and leading

educationists of the country.

Although most of the planning and policy making regarding education is done at the national level, the organization and structure of education is largely the responsibility of the states. Overall structure of schooling in all the states of India is fairly uniform. There are two basic levels - elementary education level, which consists of the primary school level and the middle and secondary school level. In most of the states, primary school level is up to grade 7 or grade 8 and secondary school level consists of grade 8 to 10 or grade 9 to 10 respectively. Even though there is overall uniformity in the structure of schooling among all the states, there are some variations in school stages in various states. Apart from variations in school stages, there are some other differences nationwide such as differences in regulatory boards, curriculums, and school offerings.

Administration of education

Schooling is offered by state level authorities as well as by national level authorities. Primary education has been decentralized in most of the parts of India. District Boards of Education (DBEs) in each district plan and administer provision of primary education in their respective districts. District specific plans include development of instructional material, teacher training, provision of infrastructural facilities, etc. However, these facilities and support are available only to government primary schools and government-aided primary schools.²

State level secondary schools are administered by the state boards of secondary education. State boards are responsible for activities related to affiliations, academics, and examinations (academic assessment) at the end of secondary education in their respective states, while the central board of Secondary Education (CBSE) supervises national level schools.³

Apart from CBSE and state boards, The Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) is an all India private non-governmental board. CISCE administers schools affiliated to it throughout India and sets curriculum and conducts examinations for K – 10 grades for affiliated schools. The National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) is the board for open school functions under the supervision of the Ministry of Human Resource Development. NIOS administers secondary and higher secondary examinations for students who are homeschooled or receiving some other form of non-formal education.

Curriculum

After adoption of the National Education Policy, 1968, acceptance of a 10+2+3 common educational structure was an important step for Indian education system to evolve as a national system. In order to give concrete shape to the

recommendations of NPE, 1968 and NPE, 1986, NCERT brought out two curriculum initiatives, (a) The Curriculum for the Ten-Year School—a framework (1975); and (b) The National Curriculum for Elementary and Secondary Education—a framework (1988) respectively.

The Curriculum for the Ten-Year School—a framework (1975) attempted to restructure content and processes of school education based on the National Curriculum Framework to set common objectives and common schemes of studies across the country, but due to lack of a comprehensive plan the implementation of Curriculum for the Ten-Year School framework remained uneven among states and union territories.

In addition, the curriculum developed by NCERT at the national level includes general objectives, subject-wise objectives, general schemes of studies, and detailed syllabi and instructional material is developed based on the national curriculum. Schools run by national organizations follow national curriculum and use syllabi and instructional material developed at the national level. However, the national curricular framework is always a suggestive framework for the states (although the states have to include all the components of the common core) and the states have flexibility to adapt it according to their cultural, political and social preferences. Nevertheless, due to the credibility of NCERT and its participatory approach (NCERT curriculum framework is developed in collaboration with all the states and union territories), the states accept the national curriculum as it is.

State boards of secondary education and CBSE also set curricula for their respective schools. Public schools and government aided schools have to follow these curricula. It is not mandatory for private schools to follow curricula set by the state boards or CBSE, nevertheless, many private schools prefer following core curricula set by the state boards and/or CBSE. There is, however, a vast difference between state boards' curricula and CBSE curriculum and CBSE curriculum is often considered more advanced than state boards' curricula. CISCE designs its own curriculum and the affiliated schools have to follow it.

Instructional materials

In Indian schools, textbooks are the most important and often, the only instructional material available for educating children. As a result, textbooks assume an important role. Textbooks and other instructional materials (if available) are designed by respective state boards of secondary education and CBSE. The National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) is responsible for developing textbooks at the national level and The State Councils for Educational Research and Training (SCERTs) are responsible for developing textbooks at the respective state levels. These textbooks are usually made available in the beginning of the school year by private book vendors; made available at fairly affordable prices.⁴

Funding

Elementary and secondary education is predominantly funded by state governments in India and the central government's share has been miniscule, around 10 percent. The central government is, nevertheless, responsible for funding schools affiliated to CBSE and NIOS. However, CISCE schools are not funded by either the central government or the state governments.

The legal framework

India received independence in 1947 and the constitution of India came into force in 1950. After independence, Maulana Azad, India's first education minister, emphasized central government's control over education system in order to have a uniform educational system throughout the country. Nevertheless, given the cultural and linguistic diversity in India, education remained essentially a state subject in the constitution from 1950 until 1976. The central government thus had responsibility limited to running central schools, central universities, and central institutes for educational training and research, especially related to scientific and technical educational research.

In 1976, education was transferred on to the Concurrent List in the constitution through constitutional amendment. Article 246 (2) in the constitution proclaimed equal partnership of national and state government in framing educational policies. However, while ratifying any law related to education, article 254 provided supremacy to the national government over states. Thus, this amendment allowed the national government to implement any policy decision in any state regarding education (Mishra, 2009).

As a result, since 1976, the national government formulates educational policies and state governments have to follow them. The National Policy on Education (NPE) was the first national policy related education that the national government formulated in 1968. NPE, 1968 is a comprehensive education policy that dealt with several educational issues, such as free and compulsory education, status, emoluments and education of the teachers, development of languages, equalization of educational opportunity, educational structure and so on. However, the policy focused mostly on learning regional languages. NPE, 1968 outlined a 'three language formula', which enunciated that from secondary education onwards, the instruction in the schools will be in English language, respective regional language, and in Hindi, the national language. Another highlight of NPE, 1968 was to increase spending on education to six percent of national income of the country.

The second National Policy on Education (NPE) was announced in 1986. NPE, 1986 significantly placed "special emphasis on the removal of disparities and to equalize educational opportunity by attending to the specific needs of those who have been denied equality so far." Due to this approach, NPE, 1986 was considered

revolutionary. This policy also recognized the importance of early childhood education and primary education. As mentioned in NPE, 1986, Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) will receive high priority. In addition, the day care centers will support universalization of primary education by enabling girls engaged in taking care of their siblings to attend schools. This program will also support working women belonging to poor classes.⁵

NPE, 1986 also accentuated the importance of investment in primary education for child development. In order to improve primary education, Operation Blackboard was undertaken as a part of policy implementation. The policy called for primary involvement of the governments, local bodies, voluntary agencies, and individuals for better implementation of Operation Blackboard.

NPE, 1986 was modified in 1992. The modifications also focused on elementary education and highlighted the importance of universal access, enrollment, and retention up to 14 years of age, and improving quality of education (Economic Survey, 2005-06).

In Part III of the Constitution, Article 15 (4) and Article 29 (2) provide a framework for the states to make special provisions for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes. Article 46 empowers states to protect the interests and special needs of scheduled caste and scheduled tribe communities (Raju, 2006).

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009

In 1950, when the constitution of India came into force, it made clear distinction between fundamental rights and directive principles. The fundamental rights are absolute and legally enforceable; whereas, the directive principles are policy directives to the states. This dichotomy remained unchanged for several decades. However, in 1980s and 1990s the Indian judiciary made very liberal interpretations of article 21 (Right to Life) of the Indian constitution. From the education point of view the most relevant and groundbreaking interpretation of article 21 was made during the Supreme Court's ruling of the Unnikrishnan Judgement (1993). The Supreme Court ruled that article 45 part of the directive principles falls within the ambit of article 21. The Supreme Court further mentions in the judgment – Right to education is not stated expressly as a Fundamental Right in Part III of the Constitution of India. However, having regard to the fundamental significance of education to the life of an individual and the nation, right to education is implicit in and flows from the right to life guaranteed by Article 21. That the right to education has been treated as one of transcendental importance in the life of an individual has been all over the world. Without education being provided to the citizen of this country, the objectives set forth in the Preamble to the Constitution cannot be achieved. The Constitution would fail.⁶

The Unnikrishnan Judgment led to a widespread social activism by several civil society groups in India demanding to incorporate the Right to Education as a

fundamental right in the Indian constitution. As an aftermath of the constant demands by social activists and a long legislative process, the Government of India ratified the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE Act) on August 4, 2009, making education a fundamental right for every child below the age of 14. This act came in force on April 1, 2010.

This act called for some important amendments in the constitution. Some of these amendments are –

- Article 21 (A) was included in the constitution, forming the basis of the fundamental right to Education. According to this article, the state shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years, by law and the state can determine the format for provision of it.
- Article 30 provides for protecting the rights of both religious and linguistic minorities.
- Article 45 provides for compulsory and free education to children below the age of 14. The 86th amendment was one of the important steps towards the operationalization of this objective. According to this amendment, the government should guarantee early childhood care for the children below the age of six.
- According to Article 51A (k), it is the duty of the parent or guardian to give opportunities of education to children between the age of six and fourteen.
- According to the RTE Act, “Free and Compulsory” means education will be free for the children and it will be compulsory for the state to provide education to every child between the age group of six to fourteen years.

Freedom to establish non-state schools

The constitution of India permits the existence of private schools. These private schools can be government aided schools, schools recognized by the government but not funded by the government, and schools not recognized and not funded by the governments. In Indian constitution, article 28 (1) and 28 (2) provide freedom to all Indian citizens to establish private educational institutions. One of the objectives of this freedom for all Indian citizens is to be able to provide religious instruction of their choice.

Clauses c and g in article 19 also provide freedom to any citizen of India to establish private schools, as clause c of article 19 provides every citizen of India with the right “to form associations and unions” and clause g of article 19 provides with the right “to practice any profession, or to carry on any occupation, trade or business”. (The Constitution of India, 1950 (As modified in 2007))

About 80 percent of schools operating in India are government run. However, due to the poor quality of government schools, many people prefer private schools, especially in urban areas. According to the 2001 census, about 28% students in urban areas attend private schools. This percentage is very slim in rural areas. Nevertheless, the growth of private schools has been underestimated, as the estimates do not include growth of unrecognized schools. In rural areas popularity of private schools reflects the breakdown of government schools rather than parental ability to pay for private schooling (Kingdon- Gandhi, March 2007; see Das, 2006)).

Teacher absenteeism and poor public spending on education are considered as two important reasons for poor performance of government schools. According to the International Institute for Educational Planning, the teacher absenteeism rate in India's public schools was about 25% in 2002 (Reinikka & Smith, 2004) and it has not changed significantly as of today. According to the UNESCO Institute of Statistics, public expenditure on education in India was mere 2.8% of India total GDP (Education Counts: Benchmarking Progress in 19 WEI Countries, September 2006).

Many authors, such as Govinda & Varghese 1993, Bashir 1994, and Kingdon- Gandhi, 1994, 1996 performed studies to analyze the relative effectiveness of public and private schools in India. These studies were conducted in different parts of India and differ in many other ways, but they reach a common conclusion that in learning achievement private school students outperform their counterparts in public schools. The National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA), an official education think tank, states that about two third of students in urban parts of Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Uttar Pradesh, some of the large states in India, are educated in private schools.

Studies have repeatedly recorded that private schools serving poor populations have poor infrastructure as compared to government schools. Teachers in these private schools are paid less as compared to their counterparts in government schools. According to James Tooley of Newcastle University (UK), the teachers in private schools serving poor children receive one third the salary of teachers in government schools. However, student – teacher ratios are better in these private schools, which provides relatively more teacher time for each student. Private schools experience a high rate of attendance. They tend to introduce English as a second or third language at earlier grades and most of these private schools also offer instruction in English language. Parents value education in English, and tend to enroll their children in private schools, where they have to pay some fees as opposed to free government schools (Muralidharan, 2006). One of the important elements is high student performance in private schools. According to James Tooley's study of 918 schools in Hyderabad's slums, unrecognized private schools' students scored 22% higher than mean score in mathematics. A national study led by the NGO, Pratham, recorded that even in villages 16% of the pupils were now in private primary schools and achieved 10 percent higher scores in verbal and math (Das, 2006).

As far as religious instruction in an educational setting is concerned, it is important

to note that according to article 28 (1) of the constitution of India, “No religious instruction shall be provided in any educational institution wholly maintained out of State funds.” However, according to article 28 (3) of the constitution,

No person attending any educational institution recognized by the State or receiving aid out of State funds shall be required to take part in any religious instruction that may be imparted in such institution or to attend any religious worship that may be conducted in such institution or in any premises attached thereto unless such institution or in any premises attached thereto unless such person or, if such person is a minor, his guardian has given his consent thereto.

Further, article 30 (1) of the constitution states, “All minorities, whether based on religion or language, shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.”

Homeschooling

Home Schooling is not widespread in India, but it has been gaining importance in recent years in metropolitan areas, especially Bangalore, Pune, and Mumbai. At present, homeschooling is not regulated by any of the government authorities. As a result, homeschoolers do not have to be registered with any of the present government agencies or authorities. Homeschoolers usually follow the CBSC curriculum or curriculum of their respective states. Children who are homeschooled can appear for board examination conducted by NIOS (National Institute of Open Schooling) after the age of 14 years or IGCSE (International General Certificate of Secondary Education) examination, which is an internationally recognized qualification for secondary students.

With the advent of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, there has been rising confusion among homeschooling parents. According to Vinod Raina, who was closely associated with formulating the law, it emphasizes infrastructure, teacher qualification, and government recognition, and all schools are required to comply to all these three conditions.⁷ Since the RTE act does not include homeschooling in one of the definitions of “school,” this implies that homeschooling would not be recognized by the government.

Homeschoolers had a feeling that RTE act infringed on their freedom to choose the mode of education. As a result, homeschoolers demanded amendment of the act in order to accommodate homeschooling as one of the approved modes of education. In response to the agitation of the homeschooling parents, the HRD minister, Mr. Kapil Sibbal, clarified the ministry’s position on homeschooling, in an interview with ‘The Times of India’ in late 2010, “The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 wants every child to be in school, but if somebody decides not to send his/her children to school, we are not going to interfere. The compulsion is on the state, not on the parents. Parents are free not to send their children to school but teach them at home. We cannot be micromanaging.”

School choice not limited by family income

National and state governments consider that education up to middle school level is almost free, as the state governments do not charge any tuition for the students. However, other costs of schooling such as cost of text books, uniforms, and other educational supplies are borne by the parents. As a result, education in India is not completely free. National and state governments, nevertheless, have some monetary incentives for the children belonging to economically and/ or socially backward classes.⁸

The tuition exemption up to middle school level only applies to public schools and government aided schools. Private and unaided schools charge tuition to their students, and the amount of the tuition varies with private schools' policies. The government does not have any control over the tuition amounts charged by private schools.

School distinctiveness protected by law and policy

Private sector schools can be categorized as schools which receive government funding but are run by private management, schools that receive little government funding but are recognized based on certain criterion outlined by the government and must follow certain regulations, and schools which are unrecognized and might not meet the criteria, such as, infrastructure or teacher salaries required for government recognition. Private schools which receive funding from the government are known as aided schools. During the early post-independence period, although the aided schools received funding from the government, teachers were directly hired and paid by the schools. However, since 1970s, these teachers receive their salary directly from the state and are recruited by a government appointed commission, but their routine operations are governed by the private management (Kingdon-Gandhi, 2008). Private schools have to meet certain criteria regarding infrastructure, teacher qualifications and salaries to receive recognition from the government. Recognized private schools often get some, although small, amount of funding from the government. The private recognized schools are generally large in size and often run by non-profit organizations or politicians and located in urban areas. The unrecognized schools are frequently run in a more ad-hoc fashion and most of these schools are very small in size.

Aided schools and recognized private schools are regulated by the state and national government, except that the degree of intervention for aided schools is high as compared to the recognized private schools. For unrecognized schools, on the other hand, there are no government regulations. Despite government regulations, aided schools and private recognized schools can modify curriculum to a certain extent according to the needs of the community. Private recognized schools have freedom to choose state board curriculum or Central board curriculum or CISCE curriculum.

Distinctive character

The Indian public education system faces many challenges when it comes to quality

of elementary education. It is important to note that the public education system caters mostly to the socially and economically disadvantaged class in urban and rural regions of India. As a result, public schools experience high dropout rates, very low school attendance and attainment rates all over India. In addition, the quality of teachers and teaching and learning, quality of school infrastructure, and accessibility of schools are often questioned.

Government-aided private schools cater to mostly the lower middle class and middle class, and quality issues pose less challenge to these schools. Non-aided private schools charge fees and cater to the middle class, upper middle class, and wealthy; their quality is considered much better as compared to public and government-aided schools.

As these various types of schools cater to different socioeconomic classes, this classification leads to inequalities in access to education. These different types of schools create disparities among children from higher socioeconomic class and lower socioeconomic class. Cost of education is considered one of the most important barriers to access to quality education. Economically-disadvantaged children cannot attend private schools. In order to remove this barrier, national government and various state governments are contemplating the option of school vouchers.

According to Mr. Manavalan, an advocate of school choice campaign in India, the government, since it is clearly not able to provide quality education, should simply provision the schooling of children through a funding program, and let the parents themselves choose the private schools for their children. He further argues, “It is estimated that the state government spends around Rs.1000 per month on a student in its schools. At much less cost, private schools deliver better results. Give the poor parents that money, and they can provide their children with competitive education in private schools.”⁹

Various state governments are running pilot school voucher projects in their states for elementary schools, such as, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Uttakhand, and Rajasthan.¹⁰ In addition to school voucher initiatives, various state governments are making secondary education available for free in public schools and government aided schools and running various scholarship programs in order to tackle economic disparity in access to education.¹¹

Decisions about admitting pupils

Unlike government schools, aided and private recognized schools can have student admission preferences. These preferences can be in terms of fees charged for admitting students or minimum test score required for admission.

Also, the RTE Act earmarked 25% seats for the students belonging to the weaker section and disadvantaged groups in the neighborhood private schools and these schools are required to provide free elementary education to such admitted students

(The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009. This applies also to private unaided schools. However, under the RTE Act the government is not liable to compensate these schools for the lost tuition.

Damodar Goyal, president of the Society for Unaided Schools in the state of Rajasthan said, “Fees is the main source of income for the schools. If the Centre doesn’t give any subsidy for taking 25% students from weaker sections, then schools will be left with no choice but to pass the burden on to the other 75% students.”¹²

Government aided schools cannot select pupils on the basis of religion or other factors. According to the Constitution, article 28 (1), “No religious instruction shall be provided in any educational institution wholly maintained out of State funds.” Nevertheless, unaided private schools may do so. According to article 28 (2), “Nothing in clause (1) shall apply to an educational institution which is administered by the State but has been established under any endowment or trust which requires that religious instruction shall be imparted in such institution.”¹³

Decisions about staff

For recruiting teachers there are no legal or constitutional procedures described in India. Teacher recruitment process varies according to different states, for example, in some states academic grades earned in class 12 are considered for recruiting primary teachers, in the state of West Bengal teachers are recruited on the basis of grade 10 test scores, whereas, states like Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka hold a Talent Eligibility Test for recruiting teachers.

Primary teachers are required to pass the grade 12 examination and a one year course at a District Institute of Education & Training (DIET), while teachers at the secondary and higher secondary levels must have a B.Ed and M.Ed, respectively.

There are many government teacher training institutions offering B.Ed and M.Ed courses. These training institutes are situated in most districts. However, in recent years many private teacher training institutes started offering B.Ed and M.Ed courses as well. Even though there are private and government teacher training institutes, selection of students in both type of institutes is based on Common Entrance Tests conducted at the state level. Government teacher training institutes tend to admit students ranked high on the Common Entrance Tests, whereas, in the private institutions the admission is also dependent on the financial capacity of the student in addition to the scores on Common Entrance Test.

Recruiting of the teachers in the public schools is done at the state level. However, private schools have their own recruitment procedures. Academic performance is the key criterion when recruiting teachers.

Dismissal of teachers is not a common phenomenon. However, in case of financial exigency the states can terminate teachers depending on the educational budget cuts.

Even though teacher recruitment is done by the states, the general pay structure is regulated by the national government. As a result of a pay commission in 2008, teacher salaries went up by almost 40 percent. Teacher salaries are generally based on the academic qualifications the teachers possess.

Accountability for school quality

Failure to acquire basic numeracy and literacy skills as a result of high dropout rate, low school attendance and low school attainment rate among primary and secondary students reflects the poor quality of education in India (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2007). Improving the quality of education has remained a distant dream despite various efforts at national and state levels, as these efforts were not concerted. However, with increasing rate of globalization and international competition, the national government striving hard to improve overall quality of education provided at all possible levels.

In order to ensure a common platform for evaluation throughout the country and improve quality of education, the national government has laid emphasis on Minimum levels of learning for each stage of school education indicated in terms of minimum learning outcomes to be attained by all the pupils in respect of each curricular area at each stage of school education. The minimum learning outcomes for each curricular area will have to be specified keeping in view the research findings regarding the mental ability of pupils at different stages of their development and the academic and physical resources that could be made available in the school for effective transaction of the curriculum.¹⁴

In addition, the policy makers are envisaging flexibility in strategy for curriculum selection, relevance of learning to the needs and environmental context of the pupils, and initiatives taken by teachers, schools, and local authorities in order to make minimum learning outcomes more effective and relevant.

A centrally sponsored scheme has been introduced for improving the quality of education in India. This scheme has five components –

1. Improvement of Science Education in Schools
2. Promotion of Yoga in Schools
3. Environmental Orientation to School Education

4. National Population Education Project

5. International Science Olympiads

Improvement of science education was eventually transferred to the states to implement, while the other components are implemented by NCERT. However, it appears that very few states implement this scheme.¹⁵

At elementary and secondary school level test scores on annual examinations are widely recognized and used evaluation methods all over India. There is no specific monitoring mechanism in place to keep track of quality of education. However, recently it has been felt at national and state levels that test scores are not adequate to measure quality of education offered at elementary and secondary school levels.

In order to improve the quality of education, it is important to monitor and evaluate. One of the initiatives for improving quality was community ownership of elementary education. In order to make monitoring more effective, under this initiative various management decentralization options were contemplated and implemented, such as, School Management Committees, Village and Urban Slum Level Education Committees, and Parents' Teachers' Associations. However, these initiatives were found insufficient to improve the quality of elementary education.

As a result, the Government of India's Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) in conjunction with NCERT is endeavoring to implement a program of monitoring and supervising quality of elementary education. This framework is known as Quality Monitoring Tools (QMT) and it will be used at five levels, viz. state, district, block, cluster, and school/community.¹⁶

NCERT proposes eight major aspects for improving quality of elementary education: Basic Infrastructure and other Facilities, Management and Community Support, School and Classroom Environment, Curriculum and Teaching Learning Material, Teacher and Teacher Preparation, Opportunity Time (Teaching-Learning Time), Classroom Practices and Processes, Learners' Assessment, Monitoring and Supervision. These cover major quality indicators of elementary education, such as, Children's Attendance, Community Support and Participation, Teacher and Teacher Preparation, Curriculum and Teaching Learning Materials, Classroom Practices and Processes, and Learners' Assessment, Monitoring and Supervision.¹⁷

The development of this framework took place at the national, regional, and state levels, and three analytical formats were adopted to be used at each of the five specified levels, with instructions on frequency of the monitoring, when, and by whom (Alexander, 2007).

This is by far the most extensive framework that has been implemented for

monitoring the quality of elementary education in India. However, this framework is in a very preliminary stage of implementation and is subject to modification. Therefore, it is very hard to discuss QMT's success or failure at this point.

Teaching of values

The framers of the National Policy of Education, 1986, insisted that a “growing concern over the erosion of essential values and an increasing cynicism in society has brought to focus the need for readjustments in the curriculum.” They therefore advocated education as “a forceful tool for the cultivation of social and moral values.” As a result, the Policy strongly endorses that “in our culturally plural society, education should foster universal values, oriented towards the unity and integration of our people. Such value education should help eliminate obscurantism, religious fanaticism, violence, superstition and fatalism.” However, besides this “combative role” the Policy advocated that “value education has a profound positive content, based on our heritage, national and universal goals and perceptions. It should lay primary emphasis on this aspect.”¹⁸

In order to adhere to the perceptions and concerns about value education mentioned in the NPE, 1986, the National Curriculum Framework emphasized including national and cultural values such as egalitarianism, democracy and secularism, equality of the sexes, protection of the environment, removal of social barriers, observance of the small family norm and inculcation of the scientific temper in the national common core curriculum.¹⁹

The NCERT developed prototype instructional material in the area of values education. This material was designed for educational planners, teachers, teacher trainers, students in the form of reading materials, source books, and audio-visual materials. The states were expected to consider these instructional materials as guidelines for developing their own value education syllabi and instructional material or adapting and/or modifying these materials suiting to their specific needs. However, the nature of implementation of value education at the state levels is not widely known (Kolhatkar, 1997). However, state education boards of states like Gujrat, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, and Uttar Pradesh have made values education a mandatory requirement of their respective curricula for elementary and secondary schools. This values education is offered through various different forms in various states, such as, textbooks, audio-visual content, and extra-curricular activities (community service).

Endnotes

- ¹ <http://www.education.nic.in/cd50years/g/u/9F/oU9Fo201.htm>
- ² <http://www.education.nic.in/cd50years/r/2Q/A2/2QA20501.htm>
- ³ <http://www.education.nic.in/cd50years/r/2Q/A2/2QA20501.htm>
- ⁴ <http://www.education.nic.in/cd50years/r/2Q/A2/2QA20701.htm>
- ⁵ <http://education.nic.in/cd50years/g/T/49/oT490501.htm>
- ⁶ Unnikrishnan judgement, page 7 <http://judis.nic.in/supremecourt/imgs.aspx>
- ⁷ <http://multiworldindia.org/07/impact-of-the-rte-act-on-alternative-innovative-schools/>
- ⁸ <http://www.education.nic.in/cd50years/r/2R/I3/2RI30101.htm>
- ⁹ <http://www.indiatogether.org/2007/jun/edu-choice.htm>
- ¹⁰ <http://schoolchoice.in/voucherschemeindia.php>
- ¹¹ <http://www.education.nic.in/cd50years/g/t/W/oToWoBo1.htm>
- ¹² <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/jaipur/Private-schools-shy-away-fromimplementing-RTE-provisions/articleshow/7220275.cms>
- ¹³ <http://lawmin.nic.in/coi/coiason29july08.pdf>
- ¹⁴ <http://www.education.nic.in/cd50years/q/91/HL/91HLo401.htm>
- ¹⁵ http://planningcommission.nic.in/plans/planrel/fiveyr/11th/11_v2/11v2_ch1.pdf
- ¹⁶ ssa.nic.in/quality-of-education/QMT.pdf
- ¹⁷ *ibid*
- ¹⁸ <http://education.nic.in/policy/npe86-mod92.pdf>
- ¹⁹ <http://www.education.nic.in/cd50years/r/2R/I3/2RI30401.htm>

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